DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 146 HE 026 943

TITLE	Influences on Higher Education: Teaching, Research and Society. St. Catherine's Conference (Windsor, England, United Kingdom, November 1986).
INSTITUTION	King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St. Catharine's, Windsor (England).
PUB DATE	Nov 86
NOTE	6p.
AVAILABLE FROM	King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St. Catharine's, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 2HP, England, United Kingdom.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Art Education; College Instruction; College Role; College Students; Economic Impact; Educational Change; Educational Needs; Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; *Futures (of Society); *Higher Education; *Institutional Role; School Community Relationship; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS	*United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Amid demands for more cost-effective education and demographic changes, a conference was held in England on the role of higher education. Participants were drawn from institutions of higher education, polytechnics and universities, and included representatives of both the academic and administrative fields. Monty Finniston considered the benefits of teaching, learning, and research and the need for college teachers to be involved in all three. Edwin Kerr explored educational quality and excellence as those terms have become featured in recent government reports on higher education. Richard Harries discussed the role of higher education in reviving the economy of the nation. Denys Wilkinson traced developments in higher education and highlighted the need for an integrated system of higher and further education. Shirley Williams, in a consideration of the impact of higher education and its funding, concluded that the United Kingdom is an under-educated country beset by severe shortages of skill. Stewart Sutherland described some of the difficulties the Arts subjects were facing. The conference also considered the need for a better link between secondary and higher education. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 364 146

INFLUENCES ON HIGHER EDUCATION: TEACHING, RESEARCH AND SOCIETY

A ST CATHARINE'S CONFERENCE HELD AT CUMBERLAND LODGE NOVEMBER 1986

Report published by: The King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 2HP
Telephone: Egham (0784) 32316

HE 026 943

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

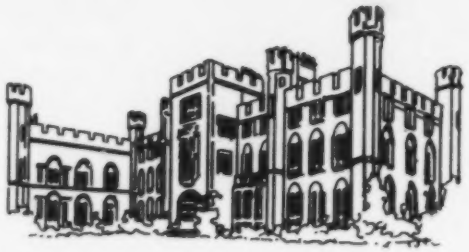
"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

King George VI & Queen Eliz. Foundation of St. Catharine's Cumberland Lodge

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INFLUENCES ON HIGHER EDUCATION: TEACHING, RESEARCH AND SOCIETY

A ST CATHARINE'S CONFERENCE HELD AT CUMBERLAND LODGE NOVEMBER 1986



Report published by: The King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 2HP
Telephone: Egham (0784) 32316

Introduction

St Catharine's conferences are an integral part of the work of the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catharine's. Each year several such conferences are held on different topics to consider a range of contemporary issues. This conference was held at a time when there was a demand for more cost-effective education from the Jarrett Report and the Government Green Paper on Higher Education, especially with the demographic changes which were leading to a sharp decline in the numbers of students expected to enter higher education.

The participants were drawn from institutes of higher education, polytechnics and universities, and included representatives of both the academic and administrative fields. In addition the Association of University Teachers, the British Council, the Times Higher Education Supplement, the National Union of Students, the Arts Council and the Church of England General Synod were represented.

The conference was addressed by:—

Sir Monty Finniston
Dr Edwin Kerr, former Chief Officer, CNAA
The Revd Richard Harries, Dean, King's College London, and a trustee of St Catharine's
Sir Denys Wilkinson, Vice-Chancellor, University of Sussex
The Rt Hon Shirley Williams MP PC, President, Social Democratic Party
Professor Stewart Sutherland, Principal, King's College London, and Chairman of the conference

In the report that follows, answers arising from the discussion period that followed each plenary introduction are included in that section where appropriate as are relevant comments from other parts of the conference.

Teaching and Research—Who Benefits?

Sir Monty Finniston described the process of education as being two-sided—teaching and learning—requiring different skills and practices. The good teacher attracts response from the pupil through the development of basic skills which are essential to living in the modern world; at school these skills include language, logic—which is not formally taught, but should be—mathematics, one or more of the science subjects and some of the humanities (including moral order). The teacher can only succeed to the level of understanding of the pupil, but this latter should never be under-rated. Universities and other institutions of higher education, and even schools, have a major responsibility to ensure that the student does not stick to a vocational concept of life but is invested with a broader view leading to a fuller life. Later, in tertiary education and through experience, comes learning of the techniques of analysis, reporting and research.

Education, through teaching and learning, is the natural predecessor of progress through change, and research is the mechanism through which knowledge is extended. Teaching circulates knowledge but if this knowledge is not applied, it is of little benefit to society, whatever benefit it may yield to the private world of the individual.

The knowledge resulting from research influences society not just materially but in our social attitudes and behaviour. As an example of how these latter have changed over the past 100 years, consider the effects of such products as the car, the aeroplane, the pill and nuclear fission on our society and its mores. Industrialisation can create better living conditions as a whole, but it can also create other unattractive features; nuclear fission, for example, can be used for civil or military purposes. The former can be beneficial whereas the latter is of doubtful merit to mankind.

The changes in society bring with them greater moral problems; for example the Warnock Report raised issues which were not considered, much less thought of, a hundred, fifty, or even ten years ago, and our current thinking may well change by the year 2000 as new knowledge, concepts and ideas emerge in the light of research. Continuing education is becoming an essential feature of our modern society since it is absurd to think that one can leave school at 16 or 18, or leave higher education at 22 or 23, and then proceed through a working life of 40 further years without the need to enlarge one's resources of knowledge.

Research is the basis upon which financial allocation is made by the University Grants Committee (UGC) to universities and research workers carry greater esteem than teachers.

This in itself underlines the conflict between the two objectives of this conference—teaching and research. There should not be institutions of tertiary or late secondary education in which teaching is the sole objective, since research, broadly defined as seeking answers to questions which have not been answered, is essential to the vitality of an institution and the inculcation of the progressive nature of a civilised society through the advancement of knowledge.

There is an inevitable tendency for research to be highly specialised and the linkage into teaching has become at best indirect and mainly through the written word. It is essential therefore that active researchers are engaged in teaching and that all teachers keep themselves involved at appropriate intellectual levels of participation through research, consultancy, scholarship, professional practice or just learning.

Who benefits from teaching and research? Naturally some gain from teaching more than others, depending on their own abilities and on the value put by the individual and society on the knowledge garnered from learning or from research. However, since we do not have a quantitative marking system for examining the benefits of knowledge, how is one to judge the benefits?

Issues of Quality in Relation to Teaching, Research and Society

Dr Edwin Kerr reminded the conference that quality and excellence are the key words on the lips of the Government and have featured in all the recent reports on education. Issues of quality and standards in Higher Education are figuring largely in the discussions about policy. The dictionary definition of quality is "the degree of excellence". British Standard 4778 defines quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy a given need" and adds, "in order to be able to assure control or improve quality it is necessary to evaluate it". This implies the identification of factors which have a bearing on its fitness for purpose and the extent to which its stated objectives are achieved. Thus, said Dr Kerr, there are many features which come in to making judgements about quality in education.

Quality is related to:—

- the institution and its environment at the course or teacher/student level
- the course approval and review system within the institution
- the resource situation
- the efficiency, discipline and absence of disorder in an institution
- the course intentions, aims and objectives—and to what is actually achieved.
- the ability of the institution to evolve and respond to new demands, to be up to date, and to modernise courses

One cannot have a static view of quality and one should also include in the definition student abilities and motivation, the institution's record in attracting research and other funding, and individual institutional features such as the library, computers, and support staff.

With these criteria it is necessary to look at trends—not just a snapshot—and ask who will do the evaluation. Validating bodies, H.M.I., or the institution itself? Moreover, who will define the ground rules? The institution, the external examiners or society—as mediated by the Government or Secretary of State?

The Lindop report concluded that the CNAA's academic peer review had been successful in increasing standards in the public sector and that universities should take up peer reviews voluntarily. This, however, was rejected by the Government.

Some institutions say they are committed to peer review but would like to choose their own peers and their own system making use of outside help. Students too could make a valuable contribution, but do we need a national system, as the Lindop report asked?

The next questions to pose are who should intervene, and on what basis, when things go wrong? The Secretary of State has shown in recent cases that he can take very deep interest in issues of quality, although this interest may well be a utilitarian interest in the technological and scientific subjects to ensure that we have enough qualified people to compete with Germany and Japan.

It has to be remembered that trends in quality change and depend on the perception of the nature of a thing. Van Gogh sold no paintings in his lifetime but they are now very valuable. Conversely Landseer was considered superb in his day whereas now his paintings are worth little. It is the duty of the CNAA and universities to anticipate the changes in our perception of quality in the academic sphere, and to anticipate society's trends, rather than to respond solely to current trends.

Dr Kerr ended on a cautious note pointing out that if cut back, an institution could live on its capital for a short time but if cut back further, as was now happening, it could not live off the capital. There must be ways for staff to be refreshed and kept up to date if quality is to be maintained.

Ethical Imperatives or Market Forces?

Richard Harries explained that the context out of which this title arose was present Government policy that higher education should play its part in reviving the economic fortunes of this country (the Government Green Paper in May 1985 expressed a worry that our economic competitors planned to produce more qualified scientists, engineers, technologists and technicians than the United Kingdom). Although this policy is associated with the present Government, the policy documents of the other main parties indicate that, whilst there are important differences of emphasis, the link between the projected economic performance of the country and the universities is a shared concern.

Many within higher education are uneasy about the graduate production line. One philosopher of education wrote, "The danger in modern universities is that students will be regarded as capital equipment and that by being 'instructed' they will be conditioned to take their place in the technical, commercial or administrative machinery of a society which recognises no values but consumption. They will therefore be made ready for being used".

For Plato in *The Republic* service to society through a cultivated good character is one of the chief aims of the long process of higher education. Similarly Newman in *The Idea of a University* is adamant that even the most liberal education can and must serve society. He believed that the end was knowledge itself, and that knowledge was the ability to relate fact to fact and discipline to discipline.

A university is not a collection of people each pursuing their own individual discipline in isolation, rather it is a community of teaching and learning in which each teacher is influenced by his/her colleagues and, as a result, keeps his/her own subject in perspective in relation to the others. Newman thought that the teaching of students, which brought about the intellectual excellence he described as being not only desirable but essential to society, was the main purpose of a university; not research which could be carried out in a variety of institutions.

Thus the question being posed about the value of higher education to the community and industry is perfectly proper

and must be answered with boldness by the higher education institutions. Serving society can hardly be equated with working in industry, but the qualities which Newman saw being taught are useful for every business as well as for the political life of the country, namely "how to accommodate himself to others, how to throw himself into their state of mind, how to bring before them his own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, how to bear with them." The Labour Party booklet *Education throughout Life*, encompassing some of these thoughts, includes amongst the aims of education "equipping people with the analytical, critical and communicative skills needed for participating in and shaping a fully democratic society."

It is clear that the provision of education cannot be divorced from ethical imperatives such as service to the community and personal development, and that the concept of market itself enshrines and expresses certain ethical values such as the equality of choice. Government has a duty to make shifts in what is taught to plan for the long-term well-being of the community and at times this will undermine the ideal of a free market.

Thus what institutions of higher education have to offer are minds capable of understanding and developing competence whatever the shifts in what is taught, or how it is taught. They have to educate for uncertainty.

The Nature of the Higher Education System

Sir Denys Wilkinson traced developments in higher education and highlighted the need for an integrated system of higher and further education. Lord Robbins had no concept of a split system and the binary line is a bureaucratic impedance to the better development of students in Britain. It is not good to have a one-dimensional system, rather a multi-dimensional cellular system in which the cells are clearly defined and are adjustable to the changing needs of society or the system, similar to the German pattern in which all the institutions are together.

There was general agreement that there should be more flexibility in the higher education system in its pattern of course provision and access to it, particularly:—

- a wider range of entry possibilities helped by a universal 'currency' of professional qualifications
- the recognition of different levels of work by credit entry to the second year of a course
- allowances for students to gain other experience through, for example, sandwich courses
- the modular approach, whose success can be seen from the Open University, providing course continuity can be assured

It is difficult to perceive social needs and translate them into higher education output. Neither economic signals nor social values are seen to be adequate bases for determining higher education structure and course provision. Whilst it is important to redress crucial skills shortages it is necessary to be wary of narrow vocational dirigisme.

Higher education is a life-long process, updating, retraining, changing direction and adding breadth and understanding. There are more people able to benefit from higher education than ever experience it and as such the age participation rate needs to be extended. This will require new criteria for admission, modified teaching, and bridging courses. Universities and polytechnics do not have a monopoly of the higher education function, since industry and commerce have a wide distribution of research and training for which higher education credits could be advanced.

The Impact on Society

Shirley Williams in a consideration of the impact of higher education came to the conclusion that the United Kingdom is an under-educated country beset by severe shortages of skill, yet virtually uniquely among all the advanced countries of the world, it intends to cut back on its provision for higher education; is engaged in reducing its provision for student numbers; has already reduced its provision for apprenticeships and is making it difficult to expand the provision for adult and continuing education. For good progress higher education should follow the falling birthrate but the dilemma is that employers, industry and the economy do not follow demographic change—their demand for skills is affected by the pattern of the economy.

There have been many calls from industry in recent years for more qualified people with information technology skills with the estimated shortfall at the present time being between 60,000 and 80,000. What is particularly disturbing is that for each one of these key positions there are two or three less qualified positions resting upon them. This represents a disaster for British Industry. We are hoping to remain a reasonable up-market country but have an education and training system which is closer to the pattern of a third world economy rather than a first world economy and are not making good the decline in skills. Whilst welcoming the extension of the Youth Training Scheme to two years, Mrs Williams was disturbed that no additional resources were being made available, and felt that it was not the answer to the shortage of intermediate or higher skills, being at best a good foundation training.

The British higher education system has the shortest period of study leading to a degree of any advanced country, and it is remarkably good in terms of cost per graduate and quality with a very low wastage rate compared with France and Germany. This system is now facing its greatest crisis since the 17th Century. The 1981 cuts of 15% had to be made hurriedly in three years (despite representations from all sides) and, paradoxically, hit engineering and technology hardest of all. Last year it was announced that the universities will face a further cut of 12–15% over the next five years. It is difficult to see how the higher education system can survive this cut of 30% over a decade unscathed.

Equipment is increasingly out of date, and buildings are out of repair. Furthermore, the Research Councils are now reducing budgets and for the first time since the war have turned down 40% of alpha rated projects in the past two years. Of the research that is done almost half of it is done on defence research—more than any of our competitors save the USA.

It was pointed out that there has not been a cutback in the productivity in teaching and research that one might have expected. That there hasn't been does not justify the fitter/leaner argument, for in research the same equipment is used to carry on the research until the point of no return is met. This is obviously a factor which affects morale, and additional resources are needed to lubricate activities and pick up morale.

The Government has said that we ought to switch places from the Humanities to Science and Technology, and has provided extra resources for this purpose. However, there are not enough qualified young people applying for these places and moreover there is a catastrophic drop in the number of potential Maths and Science teachers. In order to overcome this dilemma there is need to attract back retired Maths and Science teachers or ask industry to second people to schools for some time to fill the gaps. Many such people are very effective, with a degree of rapprochment which traditional academics do not have.

Continuing education, which is becoming a high priority, will transform higher education in a radical and dramatic way so that all those able to benefit will be entitled to higher

education. Increasingly institutions will monitor and design a whole series of courses largely intended for those who are not formal students, and who will, more and more, be using distance learning or come from the institution's own neighbourhood. The Credit Accumulation Transfer System will lead to a broadening of the system for mature and part-time students and there will need to be changes in the way the system is financed to take this into account. Part-time students' fees should be borne by the state, and if 50% of these fees were paid direct to the student the institutions would have to become more responsive to the needs of those with work or family responsibilities.

What is seriously missing in higher education in Britain is any united body to campaign for its cause. Successive Governments have been able to split the public sector and the universities by letting them argue that any expansion, and conversely any contraction, should go to the one rather than the other. It has failed to build itself a major constituency (not just the middle class) and needs to be cross-party based as in France, Germany and the USA. The higher education establishment has to be flexible, as has already been mentioned, and it should both publicise the good things it has done and say what more it can do.

And what about the Arts?

Professor Stewart Sutherland described some of the difficulties the Arts subjects were facing, and the need for them to justify their existence. There are many difficult points shared between the Arts and other subjects but the Arts subjects have been under very great pressure in recent years, and there has been a move towards courses which are vocationally orientated. This has its own intrinsic value, but it would be intolerable to see this as the sole justification for the Arts, or indeed other degree courses.

There has been a suggestion that Arts-based places should be converted to Science-based places, but this is ill-conceived on financial grounds alone. To provide the necessary resources for each Science-base place created, a significant number of Arts-based places would have to be eliminated. Already Arts-based places have been cut by 13% ahead of the demographic trends.

Support for particular subjects has now become concentrated in 'project groups' as the need to justify their existence is apparent in our quantifiable culture. Quality, selectivity and performance indicators are used to justify taxpayers' money being spent in the competition for resources but the central part of the activities of the Arts—the critique and conservation of the central values of our culture—are not quantifiable. Library budgets are not going up but the cost of periodicals is increasing, with the result that there are inadequate funds to purchase monographs essential to Arts research. This creates tensions with Science-based needs for continued journal subscriptions.

There is a myth that Arts graduates are unemployable. The statistics do not support this. Classics graduates who are well trained are still in demand. IBM for example recruits some 20% of its graduates with a Classics or History background and many of the technological firms look for those with the flexible mind inculcated in an Arts degree in addition to those with a structured and relatively narrow Science or Engineering qualification. The Humanities have to do with understanding—cultural, personal and social— and as such the Arts have much to contribute to society. Society without the Humanities is in danger of failing to understand itself.

There is much diverse support for the Arts, and the case in favour needs to be put forcibly. The pressure for quick returns from science will cause us problems in the long run.

Other Influences

The conference also considered the need for a better link between schools and places of higher education to ensure that students will arrive with different experiences of learning, including more projects and more skill-based rather than knowledge-based backgrounds. One of the major drawbacks of our highly specialised secondary system is that more than half of the students give up Science and Mathematics before they reach 15, and there is still a lack of encouragement for girls wishing to take science subjects. This is disastrous for relations between the sexes in a genuinely free-opportunity society.

The 'A' level system needs to be reformed along the lines of the International Baccalaureate with no-one abandoning Science or Maths at 15; and the post 'A' level admissions system which causes tremendous pressure for all concerned in the three months after results are announced must be reviewed, with other criteria being used to complement the admissions procedures for higher education.

Summary

The conference was in many ways a general consideration of the problems facing all sectors of higher education and a philosophical look at the stresses on teaching and research.

The underlying current was that if higher education is to survive it must broaden its constituency and undergo a process of flexible evolution in both its entrance requirements and course structure. At the same time public relations need to be improved, so that the wider constituency is made aware of the need to maintain quality and that if this quality is to be preserved it must be supported by adequate finance and assessed independently through standard peer reviews.

Codex (Egham) Press Limited
10 Wilson Road, Egham, Surrey TW20 0QB